

December 1978

Number 17

# Add Some MUSIC



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Add Some Music is published in March,  
June, September and December. Single  
copies \$1.00. Next four issues \$3.00.  
Overseas \$2.00 per issue, \$7.00 for  
next four issues.



After reading quite a few reviews of the M.I.U. Album some thoughts come to mind which unfortunately concern the reviews more than the album. The reviews are non-musical. Instead of describing musical facts the reviewers pick up on a single thread of an idea and take off tangentially. Because of the "Hawaii" themes it must be an album of "recidivism." Because some lyrics have simple, youthful ideas, the Beach Boy wordsmiths must be bankrupt. The music gets left behind. What we hear about are psychological and sociological musings of reviewers who, for quite unexplained reasons are determined to cast a negative light on the album. In most cases the reviewer advises, "At least listen to this one song ... which is worthwhile." Except for the two oldies it seems every song has been deemed that "one worthwhile" song. Meaning? Someone is confused and it is not the average Beach Boys fan.

Behind these scathing non-musical critiques stand reviewers who can not cope with a deep-rooted and misunderstood affection for Brian's music. At times this predicament is sad, othertimes it is humorous. They go to such lengths to unwittingly contradict themselves. One is likely to read "Why can't they sound like they used to?" and "Why do they try to sound like they used to?" -in the same review. The fact that this particular point is moot adds to their self-defeat.

Yes, the Beach Boys can create something better, but if this is the opinion can't it be supported in a constructive manner? Isn't it more proper to explore the tones themselves rather than the hypothetical whimsy of a single reviewer? Shouldn't we concern ourselves with the music that is there rather than the music that is not? For a brief review of the album read the "Musical Update" section, and please, add some music!

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Special thanks to: Derek Bill and Brian Berry

The Beach Boys have completed a new album for CBS. Off the album will come a ten-inch disco single of the song "Here Comes the Night." More disco tunes will be present on the album, and some Beach Boys have expressed the belief that it is superior to M.I.U. Carl Wilson has stated, "it will blow some minds." Brian Wilson remains the executive producer while aided by Bruce Johnston and Jimmy Guercio. With some luck the album will be released in late winter. One new song is called "Baby Blue Eyes."

There is evidence of late that Brian Wilson is not only back, but is showing a much renewed proclivity for leading the Beach Boys -really taking control. Throughout the summer and fall he has displayed an increasingly greater initiative and control over the Beach Boys on stage.

The "Peggy Sue" single charted on Billboard as follows: 82-72-61-59-61-100-off. In other words, it did slightly better than "Bluebirds Over the Mountain." On the top 30 survey of WDRC, a Hartford pop station, it did well: 30-27-25-19-17-off. They pushed it quite a bit however. The album has stalled at 151 on Billboard. M.I.U. is selling better in France.

A tribute to the Beach Boys was presented on the November 17th Midnight Special. Originally the Beach Boys were to appear on this show.

You can now throw away those old Rolling Stones, Crawdaddys, and every other Beach Boy article you've been hoarding. The whole story has been wrapped up into one volume: The Beach Boys and the California Myth, by David Leaf (Grosset & Dunlap, 192 pp., \$7.95 soft-cover). Mr. Leaf has collected all (all!) the old interviews, quotes, etc., and many new ones, in order to create the most complete history of that great Beach Boys psychodrama we've learned to live with. When you consider all the sources it seems the greatest feat, and no small one, was putting everything together as a coherent narrative (a harmonization process perhaps?) That he does. His writing deserves the highest praise for flowing well from start to finish. A problem is that the story is based primarily on second and third person accounts, so that at some point, for justice' sake you find yourself wanting more. For example, enough with David Anderle and his Smile ideas; lets hear from you-know-who. Or, to go one step further, lets hear the tapes!

The photographs are excellent. Their novelty will keep you interested for days on end. Another treat is the incredible number of unreleased songs that Mr. Leaf has come up with. The "California Myth" concept was evidently a late inclusion, perhaps to give the book a greater commercial scope. A three-page preface restates the idea, while the rest of the text offers no evidence of having anything to do with it. Interestingly, an earlier title to the book was Sandtracks: Growing up with the Beach Boys.



Notes made while listening to the M.I.U. Album;

She's Got Rhythm. Upbeat/Brian's highs/horns/"dadadada" backgrounds/funky piano/flute/descending piano chords/Brian's "Oooh"/mediocre Mike/"Never will forget her."

Come Go With Me. Finger snaps/strong harmony/soulful/deep Spectorish sound/strong vocal by Al/no Del Vikings' scream good horn solo/dom doms are too static.

Hey Little Tomboy. Sleighbells/child-like feeling, as in "Child of Winter"/Brian's falsetto/soulful Carl/Brian's gruff voice/basic Mike/Indian chant bass (Ten Little Indians)/willowy harmony with Carl's responses/"They're doin it all over the world" (Jan & Dean)/roller skating ending.

Kona Coast. Interesting opening/weak melody/strong answer harmony/"Go to Hawaii" comes alive/Al's voice contrasts with Mike's/beat nothing special/mediocre production/some nice percussion/"Honolulu, Waikiki..." deja vu/Brian's old ideas.

Peggy Sue. Heavy production/strong bass/hard drumming/electric guitar riffs/Al's voice is strong again/low background harmonies/good beat/nice bass guitar movement/bop bop bop, bop bop, ba dada.

Wontcha Come Out Tonight. Startling harmonies/Brian's beautiful vocal/inventive melody/Mike is just ok/but good counter melody/Brian's overdubbed 2-part harmony/organ/ending has best vocal counterpoint since Spring's "Sweet Mountain"/Brian's falsetto again/my favorite.

Sweet Sunday Kinda Love. Light organ/cymbals/Carl's voice is saccharine/consistent harmony/tambourine/Carl and harmony get stronger/celestial harmonies at end/tremolo violins.

Belles of Paris. Harmony sounds like bells/low-key vocal/nice touch as voice goes high on "oh oh oh oh."/cymbal, bass, and real bells are the sparse production/some violins.

Pitter Patter. Bass rhythm/tambourine/electric organs/good vocal by Al/contrapuntal answer harmony/full-bodied "listen to the rain"/childish refrain/shimmering instrument like rain.

My Diane. Heavy feel/Dennis falters/beautiful harmony with Brian's soprano part/emotional/lamenting violins/tearful "I love you Diane"/"everything is wrong and nothing is right" is a great line.

Match Point of Our Love. Excellent vocal/clean production/quick, light beat/de-emphasized harmonies/George Benson guitar at end/"matchpoint" Greek Chorus/a personal Brian.

Winds of Change. Piano -unusual for BBoys/strings/Mike with echo/good melody/Al contrasts/harmony response/wood block/soft chords/"Won't last forever" is good idea but not done well/martial drum rolls toll changes at end. -M.A.

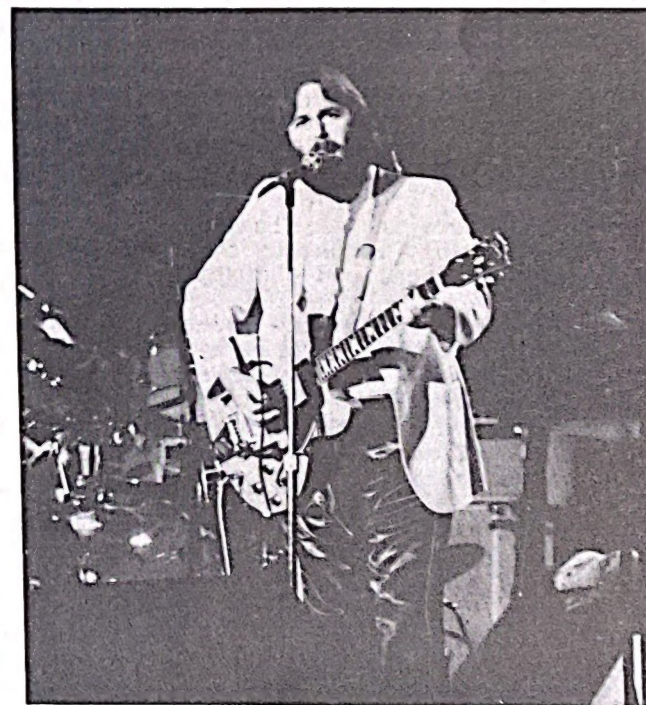
# Song Scrutiny Two Surfer Girls

- I. Candix (early) version; e.g. Scepter "Greatest Hits."
- II. Final version; Capitol 5009, single, Capitol 1981, album.

"Yeah, it's a strange thing, but I think we were always spiritually minded and we wrote music to give strength to people. I always feel holy when it comes to recording. Even during "Surfer Girl," even then I felt a bit spiritual."

-Brian for Rolling Stone, 1976.

You are the 1962 super talent scout and a couple of guys named Morgan and Wilson hand you a tape of something called "Surfer Girl." A rather harmless little ditty you reckon -but worth a recording contract? Give Mr. Venet some credit. Would you have discerned what would eventually become America's most successful vocal group on that tape? Let's listen to it.





In this earlier cut somewhat loose harmonies and a too slowed four/four time simply can not belie the song's melodic greatness. "Almost accapella" might describe the production as the boys are accompanied only by a steady "skipping" triplet beat which seems to emanate from the likes of a garbage can lid, and a throbbing bass which does little more than spell out each chord. To round out this garage production a very faint electric guitar picks crude arpeggios, audible only about a quarter of the time. Again the harmonic mix of voices is uneven, but the careful listener will detect all the promise of the Beach Boy harmonic sound which would be polished over the next two years.

Brian's later production for Capitol is the proof, and in 1963 propelled "Surfer Girl" to position seven on the singles chart -backed by a Candix compatriot, "Little Deuce Coupe." This version cured any and all ills of the earlier "Surfer Girl." However, all the changes are really very slight, indicating two things; that the original was very close to superlative, and Brian realized this and did not lose any of the original's virtues via radical alterations. Nonetheless there was one large add-on. From the beautiful falsetto fade-out Brian fashioned an intro which he would later dub "the most beautiful introduction to any song." It soars with sentiment and gives the song a cyclic nature which enhances the idea of an eternal kind of love revealed in the lyrics. Brian moves up slightly from what sounds like a D flat major tonic in the original, to a happier D major. A very slight increase in the tempo and tighter harmonies finally dispose of a somewhat maudlin aspect while maintaining a sentiment filled with child-like hope and pious intention. The harmonies reach fruition. In the original lead "We could ride the surf..." is accompanied by a ringing soprano "Ahh..." The key word is 'accompanied.' The cleaner harmony here in the final version seems to surround the lyric, not just accompany it -fusing the subconscious refrain to the vocalized thoughts.

Instrumental production remains modest while much improved. Steady triplets are offered by bass, light guitar and cymbal, producing a feeling of urgency while covering a wide emotional spectrum. To finish the story graceful bass leaps during chord changes in the A sections provide a security which is offset by guitar plucking in the B section. The sound is now professional.

No grand ideas are at work in the basic structure of "Surfer Girl." It is AABA with a bridged modulation to E flat tonic in the final A section. In the B section syn-copation on the last syllable of "together" and a melisma on "grow" provide the only clues to the possibility of adolescent angst.

There is a quality in this song which gives it the feel of a classic moreso than a song like the related "Girls on the Beach." Even "Help Me Rhonda" is undisputedly a classic, but not in quite the same way that "Surfer Girl" is. After all, if you play your entire Beach Boy collection for your mother, chances are she'll choose "Surfer Girl" as her favorite. The reasons are many. The melodic line enhances the lyrics incredibly well. Up-and-down A sections portray the naive hopes (up on "Do you-" etc.) and shaky confidence (down on "love me-" etc.) of infatuation. The lyrics can even stand on their own. "Little surfer, little one," evokes not only an angelic surfer girl, but also a just plain likeable boy-in-love.



*Lit-tle Sur-fer lit-tle one, make my heart come all un-done*

Sing the first few lines. The beauty and evocativeness are rooted in simplicity. Note how the matched descending intervals and lack of chromatics combine to give the steep opening line a singsong character which a child could repeat. A kind of infantilism is at work here. Very potent as a songwriting tool, this kind of thing is only successful insofar as it carefully taps into a deep, collective human experience. There can not be too much humor present at the same time or it will turn into parody. Buddy Holly was very successful with his stylistic use of this idea. Especially his "baby" vocalization technique, but also his lyrics would frequently generate that childish -but not childish feeling: "Pretty pretty pretty pretty Peggy Sue."

In "Surfer Girl" all the musical elements fit together perfectly, producing a song which, after the first few notes, seems to breathe with musical necessity. One could go on and on about its virtues. Feel free to do so while keeping one final thought in mind: this was just possibly the very first Beach Boy song Brian Wilson ever wrote.

Donald Cunningham

Can You Name Them? The Beach Boys have had three number one songs. In addition eleven more songs have broken into Billboard's top ten. Twelve of these fourteen are essentially Brian Wilson tunes. Jan and Dean had five songs break the top ten (Jan and Arnie also had one). Three of these were written by Brian.



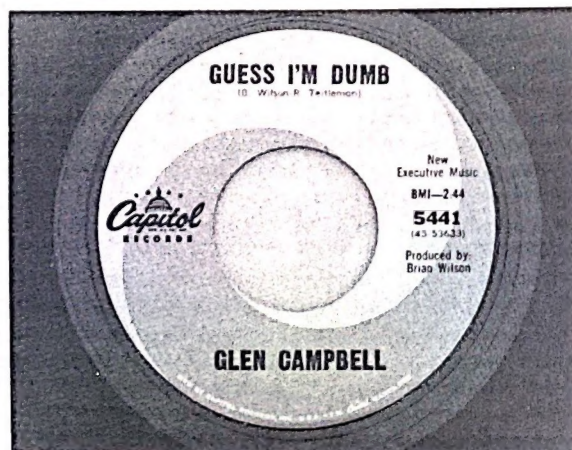
Rare Tracks  
Guess I'm Dumb

Glen Campbell  
Capitol 5441 (1965)  
Value: \$15-\$20

Glen Campbell moved to Los Angeles in the early sixties from Delight, Arkansas, and became a respected guitar sessionman; backing up Jan and Dean, and performing on many Phil Spector classics. It is well known that when Brian ceased to tour with the Beach Boys in 1965 Glen was a quick replacement. After a few months of touring Glen got sick and Bruce Johnston replaced him. However his departure was inevitable since he desired a solo career and the group felt he didn't quite have that Beach Boy karma. Nevertheless a mutual respect was established which exists today. Glen continued to play on Beach Boy tracks (mostly rhythm guitar); including "Good Vibrations." On a recent live album he included a medley of Beach Boy songs.

In mid 1965 Brian did his best to get Glen's solo career off the ground by writing, arranging, producing and singing on "Guess I'm Dumb." This record didn't sell, and Glen spent a few more years playing with the L.A. crowd, including singing with Gary Usher's "Sagittarius," before he came into his own.

As a collector's item "Guess I'm Dumb" has everything going for it: rarity, uniqueness, involvement by Brian and possibly the voices of other Beach Boys, and the aura that surrounds a primordial recording. It really doesn't sound like a typical Beach Boy or Brian Wilson song. The melody does have that wide vocal range which is characteristic of many of Brian's songs (cf. "Don't Worry Baby" and "Darlin"),



but the mood is different. The key of E flat is maintained throughout the song, but in the opening line two chromatic D flat tones produce an unsettling feeling (one is on "act", the other on "on"). Glen's vocal is beautiful, and has that slight country flavor. The slow beat portrays a lament, and if it were not for Brian's lyrical melody and Glen's excellent vocal, this song would drag. But it doesn't, for these reasons as well as the fact that a combination of strings and saucy horns provide a very interesting ritornello -instrumental interlude. Finally there are the Beach Boy harmonies as background. These are very unusual. They repeat the phrase "guess I'm dumb" like an alter ego. In retrospect there is a kind of humor to them as they imitate the sound of the horns.

Christmas EP

EMI Capitol  
15954 (1977)  
Value: \$4

When Stack-o-Tracks was finally released in England in 1977, this curious EP followed in the fall of that year. Beach Boy collectors have always been aware of three versions of "Little Saint Nick:" the single version; the Christmas album version; the Stack-o-Tracks version (the single version minus the vocals), and this EP contains these last two versions. It also has "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town." If pressing of this record is kept to a minimum it could become an excellent collector's item. The only thing missing is a picture cover.

Side one is the album version of "Little Saint Nick." This is something of an event since this has never appeared on a 45. Lacking the percussion overlay of the single version, this emphasizes the harmonies and Brian's lead vocal (sometimes I think it's Mike). This one has a warmth to it. The lively beat compares to the best rock Christmas songs. Side two opens with the Stack-o-Tracks instrumental "Little Saint Nick." Again, this is an event since never before has a Stack-o-Tracks cut appeared on a 45. The album is even mentioned on the label. On this track you can think of the bells and general percussion as replacements for the vocals. The resultant sound is very good, although it would be even better if the vocals had been erased completely. As it is, you can hear the vocals very faintly. After listening to this instrumental fade out a nice thing happens. Almost immediately "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" begins -with it's lush accapella introduction, as apposed to the lack of vocals before. Soon to follow is of course the orchestration by Dick Reynolds (incidentally, he was providing orchestration for the Four Freshmen on Capitol when the Beach Boys were singing harmonies in the back seat of their father's car). Mike and Brian share the leads, with Mike taking the "He sees you



when you're sleeping" parts. The harmonies really make the song, and as a matter of fact sound an awful lot like the Four Freshmen here -but better. Merry Christmas.



Vote '72

Various Artists  
Warner Bros. Pro 534  
Value: \$20

For the Beach Boys' part this should go under the classification of spoken word, but since this kind of thing becomes so collectible, it's worth mentioning here. In 1972 some Warner Brothers artists were recruited to make these small spots for radio, which urge voters to take part in the 1972 elections. Part promotion, part altruism. The Beach Boys are represented by Carl, Mike, Alan, Dennis, and Ricky Fataar. Each speaks in a monotone for about 20 seconds, urging people to, "put the vote in your hip pocket." The ac-



A humorous story about a possible 1971 Grateful Dead Christmas album, with involvement by the Beach Boys, has surfaced. This double album supposedly has Beach Boy vocals and production help on a couple of tracks. It's a nice idea, but most definitely a hoax.

In addition to the blue wax-white label bootleg of the "Surfer Moon" single, there is now a boot on black vinyl with a pink label. Try not to spend \$500 on this. (Should be a few dollars)

Sometime you may come across a rare misprinting of the original 20-20 album cover. When you open it up the picture of Brian peering over the eye chart is tilted by 90 degrees, so he is looking right at you. The rest of the chart and album are normal.

About a year ago the Beach Boys submitted an album of new Christmas songs in some form to Warner Brothers. It is not known what the fate of that project is. For now collectors and fans will have to listen to those tracks in their dreams, along with the Smile and Adult Child tracks, and countless others.

The Beach Boys Collector Series, Volume Three is now available. Entitled "Hawthorne Hotshots," this is a two-record double EP with nine cuts on it, many of which are unreleased songs. Derek Bill offers it. (see p. 15)

It has been reported that Ronnie Spector recently said that Brian initially offered "Don't Worry Baby" to Phil, in order that the Ronettes might record it. Evidently Phil didn't want it so Brian did it with the Beach Boys.

Make sure you have a copy of Eric Carmen's single "She Did It." But don't worry about the album. It is a disappointment in terms of Beach Boy influence and involvement. However, the single has a B-side which will pleasantly surprise you. It's called "Someday."

cent is subtly placed on the word "hip," a word which was crucial to the Beach Boys in 1972. All in all this record makes for a telling and typical piece of memorabilia from the Jack Rieley period. In addition the Beach Boys share their side with Phlorescent Leech and Eddie, and the record is worth the price just to hear these two gentlemen. One starts out by saying, "Hi, I'm Phil Spector." Then they keep you laughing for a full three minutes. A high point (sic) is their Yoko Ono impersonation. The other side of the disc has uneventful spots by Arlo Guthrie, Todd Rundgren, Beaver and Krause, and America.

Deeds



November Television  
Interview

It wasn't exactly a Barbara Walters special, but there they were being interviewed on t.v. for P.M. magazine: a coherent Mike Love recounting the early days, the musical devotion; an hirsute Brian Wilson speaking in a gruff, nervous manner; an affectionate Carl Wilson explaining his brother's difficulties. This took place backstage of an outdoor concert a few months ago. In case you did not see the show what follows is the gist of those brief, on-camera interviews.

According to Mike Love:

"We just always have had an innate ability to sing harmony together -really close harmony. This was probably our first love; music, harmony and singing together. In fact we really didn't approach the music business per se. We never had any idea of being stars, you know. It's just Brian and I used to walk up and down the street going to Wednesday night youth night at Angeles Mesa Presbyterian Church, singing Everly Brothers' songs with my sister Maureen singing the third part harmony. It's on that level. Some nights we would stay up all night in Brian's Rambler, where the seats fold down. We'd turn on the radio and listen. It was just the love of the music. It came in that way, from the love of music, not from trying to be stars or anything like that. So I think because we started with a genuine love and ability to do what we do very well -and of course Brian being very unique and a genius in terms of arrangement, that helped a lot too."



People call you a genius. People say that you're a shaper of modern music. What do you think about that?

Brian: "I'm not a shaper of modern music. I more or less went along with the shape of things. I'm really not a shaper of modern music at all."

What do you think about the claim that B.W. is a genius?

Brian: "It doesn't describe me, I don't think. I never thought of myself as a genius really."

What happened during that period when you withdrew?

Brian: "I went through withdrawal, a natural withdrawal. I had done about 15 or 16 years with the Beach Boys. It's hard. I pulled back for a while and found that no activity in my life meant no happiness. As soon as I began to become a little more active the happiness had to come back."

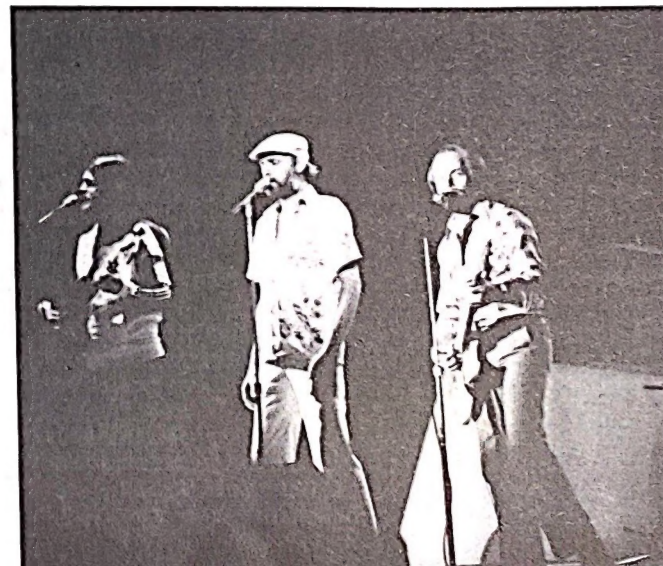
When you sit down to write a song, how does it happen, and what's not happening now?

Brian: "Well I used to sit down; I used to try to come up with a concept first. Then I'd build around the concept first. And I've even had trouble doing that in the last couple of years."

It's just not there when you reach back for it?

Brian: "No. Sometimes it takes quite a while; more than it used to take."

What do you suppose is the reason?





Brian: "I don't know. I think subject matter is scarce. I'm not as attuned to coming up with the subject matter as I used to be. Of course we used to have trends we could write on. Now we have no trends."

What's there to write about now?

Brian: "Well they say write about what you go through, or write about things you do. But things I do -it seems I wouldn't want to write about that."

Carl speaking about Brian:

"You can get hurt. You get your feelings hurt when you're sensitive sometimes. And I think a person who is operating on that level a lot of times is not necessarily in balance. And when you're not in balance a lot of things just bruise -you just get hurt."

Sure, you have to be sensitive to really be able to give in and let it hang out -with a song you're writing; let the feelings go....Maybe it's the other side of being vulnerable. You have to let the thing in to let it out. You have to be able to check it out to know what it is; to reflect it and share it with other people."

In addition there was footage via a backstage camera of them walking on when they were introduced. At one point some of their children could be seen singing on stage with them. Is there a better visual statement that can be made about the Beach Boys and their music?

Letter(s)

Don:

You might mention the fact that the "Almost Summer" lyrics from the movie of the same name are different from those released on the LP. I for one would like to know why, and would like to see these lyrics printed, and the alternate version released on a future Celebration album. Also from this movie you can hear Al's "Lady Lynda" coming from the radio of one of the girls when her boyfriend is telling her he didn't win the football scholarship. I wish this had been included on the album, as I've heard it in concert and it is great. Also, too bad you couldn't hear it better in the movie.

Ken Shipley

## HODADS

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from the people re-  
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